Minimum Wages

198. SHRI A.C. JOS :
SHRI T. GOVINDAN :
SHRI SUNIL KHAN :

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether any Labour Welfare Bill including minimum wages is likely to be introduced during the ensuing session of Parliament;

(b) if so, the proposed minimum wages therein;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the steps being taken to ensure payment of minimum wages to workers?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) to (d) Agricultural workers in the country are already covered under the provision of the Minimum Wages Act, 1948. However proposal for enacting a comprehensive law providing for regulation of complement and conditions of service of agricultural workers and for establishing a welfare fund for financing various welfare activities has been drawn up. Final decision on the proposal has not been taken and the same is under Government's consideration. Efforts are being made to finalise a Bill and introduce it in the Parliament at the earliest.

Shortage of Power

199. SHRI ANANTH KUMAR;
SHRI CHHITUBHAI GAMIT :

Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is acute shortage of power in Gujarat and Karnataka and both the States have made requests to Maharashtra Government for supply of power to these States;

(b) if so, the actual demand and supply of power of each above States at present and the decision taken by the Maharashtra Government in this regard;

(c) the details of the power projects being run in these States with the assistance of World Bank and Asian Development Bank; and

(d) the time by which the supply of power is likely to improve situation in these States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) to (d) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Fast Track Power Projects

200. SHRI SANDIPAN THORAT : Will the Minister of POWER be pleased to state:

(a) the present status of fast track power projects cleared by the Government during 1996-97 and 1997-98;

(b) whether some of the fast track projects are still limping behind the schedule time.

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether any fresh policy has been formulated to encourage foreign direct investment in the power sector; and

(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY AND MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF POWER (SHRI YOGINDER K. ALAGH) : (a) During the year 1996-97, Central Electricity Authority (CEA) accorded techno-economic clearance to the 1040 MW Visakhapatnam Thermal Power Project of M/s Hinduja National Power Corporation Limited (HNPCL) and to the 1000 MW Mangalore Thermal Power Project of M/s Mangalore Power Company Limited (MPCL). In the case of the former, the Coal Supply Agreement along with its affiliated agreements are being negotiated between Mahanandi Coalfields limited and HNPCL. In the case of the latter, Government of Karnataka and the Karnataka Electricity Board are required to send the finalised Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) to the Government of India prior to issue of counter guarantee.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The major reasons for the time taken in finalisation of the counter guarantee of the Government of India to the remaining four of the initial eight fast track power projects, *inter-alia*, are time taken in furnishing of the finalised PPAs, non-finalisation of Coal Supply and Transportation Agreement, finalisation of the evacuation system and Coal pricing.

(d) and (e) The policy enunciated by the Government of India to encourage greater private sector participation in power generation is being amended from time to time, keeping in view the changing requirements. Some of the measures taken to further liberalise the policy and encourage foreign direct investment in the power sector include enhancing the limit of the capital expenditure of the schemes requiring concurrence of CEA and providing for automatic clearance for electric generation and transmission projects where the foreign equity is less than 74 per cent of the total equity.